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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Fifty-fourth session
Item 21 of the provisional agenda

FOLLOW-UP TO THE WORLD CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Written statement submitted by the International Federation of Action of Christians for the Abolition of Torture, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement, which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[3 March 1998]

"A commitment, not a memory!"

1. The action of its 27 affiliated associations on 4 continents encourages the International Federation of ACAT (Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture) to urge all the members of the Commission on Human Rights to make sure that the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights does not signify mere remembrance of a past gesture but provides an opportunity of undertaking actually to implement the commitments entered into by each State.

2. In many areas, the gap between States words and deeds is widening. The Programme of Action adopted in Vienna in 1993 by all the States Members of the United Nations has only partially be filled. While groups working to defend human dignity come up with courageous initiatives and commit themselves in ever greater number to the promotion of human rights, the States do not seem to have made this struggle a priority. This failure to act discourages public opinion and increases scepticism about international instruments and the bodies responsible for implementing them.

3. In its resolution 1997/69, the Commission recalled that "special attention should be paid to assessing the progress towards the goal of universal ratification of international human rights treaties and protocols adopted within the framework of the United Nations". FIACAT asks the Commission to go beyond mere assessment and, in a resolution, to invite all States that have not yet done so to ratify these instruments without reservation (in particular, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, with its two protocols, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment) and to cooperate with the United Nations mechanisms for ensuring that these instruments are put into practice.

4. The Declaration of the World Conference on Human Rights called upon Governments "to incorporate standards as contained in international human rights instruments in domestic legislation and to strengthen national structures, institutions and organs of society which play a role in promoting and safeguarding human rights" (A/CONF.157/23, paragraph 83).

5. FIACAT emphasizes the importance of this declaration and the need for the Commission to make sure that it is implemented. That is why it asks for States to be reminded of the legislative and regulatory work they have to do in order to incorporate international provisions into their domestic laws. Furthermore, given the monitoring and checking role of the working groups and rapporteurs, it asks for mandates expiring in 1998 to be renewed (for example for the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions and the Special Rapporteur on questions relating to torture).

6. Various draft international instruments, the rapid completion and adoption of which had been recommended by the World Conference on Human Rights, are still being drawn up. On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the fifth anniversary of the

Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, FIACAT asks the Commission to invite the States to adopt a positive and constructive attitude with a view to concluding the examination of the following drafts:

- the draft concerning the setting up of an International Criminal Court, which would be truly independent and with enough resources to dispense justice;

- the draft of an optional protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, FIACAT asks for the next meeting of the working group in charge of drawing up this document to run for three weeks in order to allow real progress to be made;

- the draft declaration on the right and the responsibility of individuals, groups and bodies in society to promote and protect human rights and universally recognized fundamental freedoms. Defenders of human rights must be protected and the Commission should condemn States which oppose or slow down ongoing discussions on this subject.

7. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 was the reflection of an aspiration, "the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy ... freedom from fear and want". As we approach the new millennium, the achievement of this goal has become a matter of extreme urgency. Many people are valiantly working towards it and do not understand why all Governments do not make a full commitment; let 1998 be the year for showing that they really do.

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FURTHER PROMOTION AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS, INCLUDING THE QUESTION OF THE PROGRAMME AND METHODS OF WORK OF THE COMMISSION: HUMAN RIGHTS, MASS EXODUSES AND DISPLACED PERSONS

Written statement submitted by the International Federation of Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[3 March 1998]

GE.98-11024 (E)

Refugees call out to the conscience of the world

1. The world community notes that the number of displaced people is increasing considerably as is that of people fleeing from persecution. On the other hand it is to be observed that host countries are proving to be more and more restrictive when granting refugee status and that displaced groups are victims of persecution and massacres.

2. This situation indicates the responsibility both of States which create or allow the creation of conditions causing the exodus of part of the population, on their own or on foreign territory, and of States which do not provide protection to any person or people taking refuge on their territory.

3. The Commission on Human Rights must therefore, through very firm resolutions, remind countries of the commitments they have made. Fulfilment of these commitments is not optional and shall not depend on current political or economic conditions.

4. In resolution 1997/75 the Commission once again invited "all Governments and regional, intergovernmental and humanitarian organizations concerned to intensify their cooperation and assistance in worldwide efforts to address the serious problems arising from mass exoduses of refugees and displaced persons, and the causes of such exoduses."

5. The International Federation of ACAT (Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture) deplores the policies pursued by certain States and their refusal to cooperate with intergovernmental or non-governmental organizations. Direct responsibility is held in this sphere by Turkey and Iraq, whose policies have caused a massive exodus of Kurdish peoples. Further examples are provided in Colombia and Mexico, where internal displacements affect a large part of the population whilst the Government is incapable of ensuring their safety and in fact actually contributes to their insecurity. Similarly, in the Congo, many women and men have been displaced. The current authorities, despite their many promises, do not allow them to go back to their places of origin and inflict or allow many threats and acts of brutality to be inflicted upon them. Nonetheless, people displaced within their own country remain outside any international system of protection and assistance.

6. FIACAT therefore asks the Commission to demand that States accept visits by special rapporteurs (or other mechanisms) to areas affected by exoduses so that the silence surrounding such situations can be broken and protection guaranteed as soon as possible.

7. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has noted that the refugee protection system fell within the overall context of human rights, stating that any weakening of the institution of the right of asylum would bring about a weakening of the human rights protection system.

8. Hence, FIACAT calls upon the Commission:

(a) To invite host countries to make a liberal interpretation of the Geneva conventions, as suggested by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. European countries' current policy of making it ever more difficult

to apply for refugee status should be declared contrary to the spirit of international conventions. By the same token, the fact that the French authorities only exceptionally accept refugees coming from Algeria is not only an insult to their suffering but also contrary to the spirit of the texts;

(b) To remind, as it did in resolution 1997/75, all countries that it is not legitimate to return a foreigner fleeing persecution to a country where he/she may be under threat of torture or inhuman treatment and that they should, with the help of the international community, not only not put his/her life at risk but also provide him/her with the necessary conditions for a decent existence. The refusal of the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to allow inquiries to be made about the disappearances of hundreds of thousands of people who had taken refuge on their territory should be condemned and penalized. FIACAT also deplores the forced return to Burundi of refugees from that country staying in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. These events have caused a serious upsurge of violence. On the Rwandan border it appears that the Rwandan armed forces have helped the Burundi army get rid of opponents, which has given rise to massacres and violates all international laws.

9. Leaving one's own country is not a natural reflex. One has to be pushed to it by fear, hunger or repression. International rules protect human beings in especially vulnerable situations. Failure to comply with these rules means condemning entire groups of people. No country can shrug off its responsibility in the face of such inhumane practices.

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FURTHER PROMOTION AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS, INCLUDING THE QUESTION OF THE PROGRAMME AND METHODS OF WORK OF THE COMMISSION

Written statement submitted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement, which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[10 March 1998]

Preparations for the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

On the occasion of the 98th Inter-Parliamentary Conference held in September 1997 in Cairo, the Inter-Parliamentary Union - the world organization of national parliaments - adopted the following resolution with a view to the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

Resolution adopted without a vote* by the Inter-Parliamentary Council, the plenary governing body of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (Cairo, 16 September 1997) 1/

The Inter-Parliamentary Council,

Recalling the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 10 December 1948,

Stressing that the Declaration sets forth "a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance",

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* After the resolution was adopted the delegations of Indonesia and Singapore expressed reservations to the text.

1/ The following national Parliaments were represented at this Conference: Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Benin, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Norway, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, San Marino, Senegal, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Yugoslavia, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Welcoming the fact that over the years the Declaration has provided both inspiration and substance for the development of a corpus of human rights principles and standards, as enshrined particularly in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and in regional human rights instruments and national legislation,

Recalling that the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted by consensus in 1993 by the World Conference on Human Rights, reaffirmed the international community's commitment to these human rights principles and standards and their universal and indivisible character,

Noting with deep concern that the goals set half a century ago are nonetheless still distant since human rights standards are not fully and universally respected and human rights and fundamental freedoms continue to be violated in all parts of the world,

Aware of the particular duty of Parliaments and their members, as guardians of human rights, to defend and promote human rights and so contribute to the building of a world in which human beings enjoy the entire spectrum of civil, cultural, economic, social and political rights,

Recalling the many resolutions adopted in recent years by the Inter-Parliamentary Union on issues of human rights, recommending specific action by governments and parliaments to uphold and promote human rights in various areas, including in particular:

- "Strengthening national structures, institutions and organizations of society which play a role in promoting and safeguarding human rights" (Copenhagen, 17 September 1994);

- "The protection of minorities as a global issue and a prerequisite for stability, security and peace" (Istanbul, 19 April 1996);

- "Promoting greater respect and protection of human rights in general and in particular for women and children" (Beijing, 20 September 1996),

Considering that the United Nations, in General Assembly resolution 51/88, invited States "to review and assess the progress that has been made in the field of human rights since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to identify obstacles and ways in which they can be overcome to achieve progress in this area, to undertake additional efforts and to develop programmes of education and information, with a view to disseminating the text of the Declaration and arriving at a better understanding of the universal message",

1. Firmly believes that all States have a duty to seek, in cooperation with the United Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and reaffirms that human rights are a matter of legitimate international concern since respect for them constitutes a pillar of international order;

2. Reaffirms the importance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and recommends that the parliamentary community mark its fiftieth anniversary in 1998 with a series of activities in support of the defence and promotion of human rights;

3. Calls on all Parliaments and their members to take action at the national level to ensure:

(i) That international and regional human rights treaties are ratified or acceded to promptly by their countries, in case they have not already done so, and that reservations are withdrawn whenever they conflict with the object and purpose of the treaty;

(ii) That enabling legislation is enacted and that the provisions of national laws and regulations are harmonized with the norms and standards contained in these instruments with a view to their full implementation;

(iii) That full cooperation and adequate information is offered to international and regional human rights bodies, including international criminal courts, and that individual complaints procedures provided for in international human rights treaties are accepted;

(iv) That independent national institutions for human rights, including the office of an Ombudsman or equivalent institution, together with parliamentary bodies overseeing human rights issues, are established or activated to operate in keeping with human rights norms;

(v) That non-governmental organizations working for the promotion and protection of human rights receive the necessary support and protection;

(vi) That the necessary budgetary provisions are made for action to promote and protect human rights, with special reference to human rights education;

4. Invites all Parliaments to hold a special sitting on or close to 10 December 1998, with the support from national parliamentary human rights bodies, to celebrate the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to discuss the protection and promotion of human rights;

5. Invites also all Parliaments to encourage greater participation by the youth in national events to celebrate the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;

6. Calls upon Parliaments and their members to extend support and cooperation at the international level to the work of the United Nations and, in particular, the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights, as well as to regional human rights bodies;

7. Recommends that the question of respect for human rights be addressed on the occasion of the 100th Inter-Parliamentary Conference in Moscow and, to that end, urges the members of the IPU to present reports on action they have taken to follow up this resolution, well in advance of that Conference;

8. Decides in favour of the IPU being represented, in a manner to be decided upon in due time, at the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which will take place during the United Nations General Assembly on 10 December 1998, and for an IPU contribution to be prepared for the celebrations in the form of information on parliamentary mechanisms to promote and protect human rights worldwide;

9. Requests the Secretary General to pursue discussions on activities to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights with the United Nations and inter-parliamentary assemblies and organizations and to report to the Council at its 162nd session on further measures the Union may take.

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FURTHER PROMOTION AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS, INCLUDING THE QUESTION OF THE PROGRAMME AND METHODS OF WORK OF THE COMMISSION

Written statement submitted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[10 March 1998]

GE.98-11030 (E)

In the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted at the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights in 1993, the world community emphasized the need for strengthening and promoting democracy, development and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in the entire world. It is in this spirit that the Inter-Parliamentary Union undertook to advance international standards regarding democracy and thereby contribute to democratization efforts under way worldwide. The result of this process, on which the Union embarked in 1995, is the "Universal Declaration on Democracy" adopted by the world parliamentary community in September 1997 on the occasion of the 98th Inter-Parliamentary Conference in Cairo. The members of the Commission on Human Rights will find the text of the Declaration below for their information.

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION ON DEMOCRACY

Declaration adopted without a vote* by the Inter-Parliamentary Council at its 161st session
(Cairo, 16 September 1997)

The Inter-Parliamentary Council,

Reaffirming the Inter-Parliamentary Union's commitment to peace and development and convinced that the strengthening of the democratization process and representative institutions will greatly contribute to attaining this goal,

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* After the Declaration was adopted, the delegation of China expressed reservations to the text.

1/ At present, 137 national parliaments are members of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Representatives from the parliaments of the following 128 countries took part in the work of the Cairo Conference: Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Benin, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Norway, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, San Marino, Senegal, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Yugoslavia, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Reaffirming also the calling and commitment of the Inter-Parliamentary Union to promoting democracy and the establishment of pluralistic systems of representative government in the world, and wishing to strengthen its sustained and multiform action in this field,

Recalling that each State has the sovereign right, freely to choose and develop, in accordance with the will of its people, its own political, social, economic and cultural systems without interference by other States in strict conformity with the United Nations Charter,

Recalling also the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted on 10 December 1948, as well as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights adopted on 16 December 1966, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination adopted on 21 December 1965 and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women adopted on 18 December 1979,

Recalling further the Declaration on Criteria for Free and Fair Elections which it adopted in March 1994 and in which it confirmed that in any State the authority of the government can derive only from the will of the people as expressed in genuine, free and fair elections,

Referring to the Agenda for Democratization presented on 20 December 1996 by the United Nations Secretary-General to the fifty-first session of the United Nations General Assembly,

Adopts the following Universal Declaration on Democracy and urges Governments and Parliaments throughout the world to be guided by its content:

FIRST PART - THE PRINCIPLES OF DEMOCRACY

1. Democracy is a universally recognized ideal as well as a goal, which is based on common values shared by peoples throughout the world community irrespective of cultural, political, social and economic differences. It is thus a basic right of citizenship to be exercised under conditions of freedom, equality, transparency and responsibility, with due respect for the plurality of views, and in the interest of the polity.

2. Democracy is both an ideal to be pursued and a mode of government to be applied according to modalities which reflect the diversity of experiences and cultural particularities without derogating from internationally recognized principles, norms and standards. It is thus a constantly perfected and always perfectible state or condition whose progress will depend upon a variety of political, social, economic, and cultural factors.

3. As an ideal, democracy aims essentially to preserve and promote the dignity and fundamental rights of the individual, to achieve social justice, foster the economic and social development of the community, strengthen the cohesion of society and enhance national tranquility, as well as to create a climate that is favourable for international peace. As a form of government, democracy is the best way of achieving these objectives; it is also the only political system that has the capacity for self-correction.

4. The achievement of democracy presupposes a genuine partnership between men and women in the conduct of the affairs of society in which they work in equality and complementarity, drawing mutual enrichment from their differences.

5. A state of democracy ensures that the processes by which power is acceded to, wielded and alternates allow for free political competition and are the product of open, free and non-discriminatory participation by the people, exercised in accordance with the rule of law, in both letter and spirit.

6. Democracy is inseparable from the rights set forth in the international instruments recalled in the preamble. These rights must therefore be applied effectively and their proper exercise must be matched with individual and collective responsibilities.

7. Democracy is founded on the primacy of the law and the exercise of human rights. In a democratic State, no one is above the law and all are equal before the law.

8. Peace and economic, social and cultural development are both conditions for and fruits of democracy. There is thus interdependence between peace, development, respect for and observance of the rule of law and human rights.

SECOND PART - THE ELEMENTS AND EXERCISE OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT

9. Democracy is based on the existence of well-structured and well-functioning institutions, as well as on a body of standards and rules and on the will of society as a whole, fully conversant with its rights and responsibilities.

10. It is for democratic institutions to mediate tensions and maintain equilibrium between the competing claims of diversity and uniformity, individuality and collectivity, in order to enhance social cohesion and solidarity.

11. Democracy is founded on the right of everyone to take part in the management of public affairs; it therefore requires the existence of representative institutions at all levels and, in particular, a Parliament in which all components of society are represented and which has the requisite powers and means to express the will of the people by legislating and overseeing government action.

12. The key element in the exercise of democracy is the holding of free and fair elections at regular intervals enabling the people's will to be expressed. These elections must be held on the basis of universal, equal and secret suffrage so that all voters can choose their representatives in conditions of equality, openness and transparency that stimulate political competition. To that end, civil and political rights are essential, and more particularly among them, the rights to vote and to be elected, the rights to freedom of expression and assembly, access to information and the right to organize political parties and carry out political activities. Party

organization, activities, finances, funding and ethics must be properly regulated in an impartial manner in order to ensure the integrity of the democratic processes.

13. It is an essential function of the State to ensure the enjoyment of civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights to its citizens. Democracy thus goes hand in hand with an effective, honest and transparent government, freely chosen and accountable for its management of public affairs.

14. Public accountability, which is essential to democracy, applies to all those who hold public authority, whether elected or non-elected, and to all bodies of public authority without exception. Accountability entails a public right of access to information about the activities of government, the right to petition government and to seek redress through impartial administrative and judicial mechanisms.

15. Public life as a whole must be stamped by a sense of ethics and by transparency, and appropriate norms and procedures must be established to uphold them.

16. Individual participation in democratic processes and public life at all levels must be regulated fairly and impartially and must avoid any discrimination, as well as the risk of intimidation by State and non-State actors.

17. Judicial institutions and independent, impartial and effective oversight mechanisms are the guarantors for the rule of law on which democracy is founded. In order for these institutions and mechanisms fully to ensure respect for the rules, improve the fairness of the processes and redress injustices, there must be access by all to administrative and judicial remedies on the basis of equality as well as respect for administrative and judicial decisions both by the organs of the State and representatives of public authority and by each member of society.

18. While the existence of an active civil society is an essential element of democracy, the capacity and willingness of individuals to participate in democratic processes and make governance choices cannot be taken for granted. It is therefore necessary to develop conditions conducive to the genuine exercise of participatory rights, while also eliminating obstacles that prevent, hinder or inhibit this exercise. It is therefore indispensable to ensure the permanent enhancement of, inter alia, equality, transparency and education and to remove obstacles such as ignorance, intolerance, apathy, the lack of genuine choices and alternatives and the absence of measures designed to redress imbalances or discrimination of a social, cultural, religious and racial nature, or for reasons of gender.

19. A sustained state of democracy thus requires a democratic climate and culture constantly nurtured and reinforced by education and other vehicles of culture and information. Hence, a democratic society must be committed to education in the broadest sense of the term, and more particularly civic education and the shaping of a responsible citizenry.

20. Democratic processes are fostered by a favourable economic environment; therefore, in its overall effort for development, society must be committed to satisfying the basic economic needs of the most disadvantaged, thus ensuring their full integration in the democratic process.

21. The state of democracy presupposes freedom of opinion and expression; this right implies freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

22. The institutions and processes of democracy must accommodate the participation of all people in homogeneous as well as heterogeneous societies in order to safeguard diversity, pluralism and the right to be different in a climate of tolerance.

23. Democratic institutions and processes must also foster decentralized local and regional government and administration, which is a right and a necessity, and which makes it possible to broaden the base of public participation.

THIRD PART - THE INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION OF DEMOCRACY

24. Democracy must also be recognized as an international principle, applicable to international organizations and to States in their international relations. The principle of international democracy does not only mean equal or fair representation of States; it also extends to the economic rights and duties of States.

25. The principles of democracy must be applied to the international management of issues of global interest and the common heritage of humankind, in particular the human environment.

26. To preserve international democracy, States must ensure that their conduct conforms to international law, refrain from the use or threat of force and from any conduct that endangers or violates the sovereignty and political or territorial integrity of other States, and take steps to resolve their differences by peaceful means.

27. A democracy should support democratic principles in international relations. In that respect, democracies must refrain from undemocratic conduct, express solidarity with democratic governments and non-State actors like non-governmental organizations which work for democracy and human rights, and extend solidarity to those who are victims of human rights violations at the hands of undemocratic regimes. In order to strengthen international criminal justice, democracies must reject impunity for international crimes and serious violations of fundamental human rights and support the establishment of a permanent international criminal court.